



## **OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

**SHEILA SIMON – LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**

### **Illinois River Coordinating Council Quarterly Meeting**

**Wednesday, August 8, 2012  
Dixon Mounds Museum  
Lewistown, Illinois  
1:30 PM**

### **Minutes**

#### **Call to Order and Attendance**

Lt. Governor Simon called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests. She commented that she was especially pleased to hold a meeting at Dixon Mounds Museum, which she and her husband had visited on a camping trip with her two children when they were younger. She noted that the Dixon Mounds Museum holds many pleasant memories and expressed that she was glad to be back at the location.

Lt. Governor Simon invited the members of the Illinois River Coordinating Council (IRCC) to introduce themselves.

#### *Citizen Members*

Doug Blodgett, The Nature Conservancy of Illinois; Lee Bunting, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Nancy Erickson, the Illinois Farm Bureau; Daphne Mitchell; and Richard Worthen.

#### *State Agency Members*

Randy Grove, the Illinois Department of Agriculture; and Terry Weldin-Frisch, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

#### *Ex-Officio Members*

Nani Bhowmik, Illinois State Water Survey; Ivan Dozier, the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Kevin Johnson, the US Geological Survey; and Gary Meden, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District.

#### *Advisors*

Misganaw Demissie, the Illinois State Water Survey; and Ted Kratschmer, the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center.

#### *Absent Members*

Debbie Bruce, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Margaret Frisbie, Friends of the Chicago River; Reggie Greenwood, the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association; Marcia Willhite, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; and Janel Veile, Illinois Department of Transportation.

#### *Absent Ex-Officio Members*

Bob Barry, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois River; Colleen Callahan, the US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development; Louise Clemency and Scherrie Giamanco, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago Office; Colonel Mark Deschenes, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; Colonel Christopher Hall, the US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District; Tim Henry, the US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5; Captain Steve Hudson, the US Coast Guard, Sector Upper Mississippi; Don McKay, the Illinois Geological Survey; Colonel Vincent Quarles, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District; and Lieutenant Doug Salik, the US Coast Guard, Sector Lake Michigan, Marine Safety Unit Chicago.

#### *Absent Advisors*

Brian Anderson, the Illinois Natural History Survey; and Manohar Kulkarni, the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Lt. Governor Simon invited a motion to approve the IRCC minutes from June 20, 2012 in Chicago. The motion was made by Weldin-Frisch and seconded by Blodgett. The motion passed without opposition.

#### **Chairman's Remarks**

Lt. Governor Simon informed Council members that a new training for the Open Meetings Act is required for all members of a public body in the State of Illinois. She noted that information on the training was given to the members of the Council within their packets for the meeting, and informed the members that the training must be completed prior to September 30.

Lt. Governor Simon reminded the Council that at the previous meeting on June 20 in Chicago, the IRCC raised questions directed at the state agencies involved in the permitting processes for the potential sand mine near Starved Rock State Park. The questions were drafted by the Office of the Lt. Governor (Office), and sent to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Rock Island District on July 2. Answers were received from the agencies over the following week, and were organized by the Office. The responses were then provided to Council members on August 2. Lt. Governor Simon reminded the Council that a special phone conference was held on August 7 to discuss the answers from the state agencies in greater detail. She thanked the members that participated in the phone conference, during which members of the Council and the public discussed the responses provided by the agencies and asked follow-up questions of the agencies. Lt. Governor Simon informed the Council that another phone conference would be held at a later date to further discuss the issue.

In regard to sand mining permitting processes, particularly in consideration of sand mines that are close to natural resources, Lt. Governor Simon commented that a particular process should be followed. First, she noted, it is important to consider what legislation applies to the permitting processes, which agencies are involved in the processes, and what the legislation requires of those agencies. Next, she commented, it is important to question whether the agencies are fully completing their legislative requirements, and assist in facilitating the processes. At the same time, she noted, it is important to

ensure that citizens have access to the permitting processes to ensure that the right procedures are being followed. Finally, Lt. Governor Simon commented that it is important to learn from the permitting processes and question if, and how, the legislation can be altered to balance all interests that are involved.

Lt. Governor Simon introduced Andy French to speak on the National Blueways System. French formerly served as the manager of the Illinois River Refuge. Currently, French is the manager for the Silvio O. Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge and serves as the Executive Director of the Connecticut River Watershed Council. The Connecticut River Watershed was the first watershed area to be recognized as a National Blueway.

### **National Blueways Presentation – Andy French, Silvio O. Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Manager**

Rivers play a vital role in connecting Americans with the lands and waters that provide economic, recreational, social, cultural and ecological value to their communities. Healthy rivers are integral to the quality of life for all Americans and their communities, as rivers and watersheds are essential sources of clean water supplies for rural, agricultural and urban communities alike. Rivers also provide important habitat for fish and wildlife species and act as corridors for their migration and dispersal, providing ecosystem connectivity that supports resilience to environmental change. Further, rivers support recreation and tourism economies by providing opportunities for boating, fishing, hiking, camping, swimming, and numerous other activities, while also providing a focal point for environmental education and outreach.

Across the United States, communities of stakeholders have formed partnerships focused on stewardship and sustainability of rivers and their watersheds. When these partnerships work successfully across federal agencies, and in partnership with state, local and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, private landowners and businesses, they are able to accomplish their shared stewardship and conservation objective. National recognition and federal agency coordination in support of river systems will inspire and assist stakeholders as they plan and manage for the resiliency and connectivity of their rivers, seek cooperation and collaboration among communities and across jurisdictions, and strive for an integrative, adaptive approach for sustaining the entire river system. For this purpose, the National Blueways System was created.

On May 24, 2012, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar signed a Secretarial Order establishing the National Blueways System to recognize river systems conserved through diverse stakeholder partnerships that use a comprehensive watershed approach to resource stewardship. The National Blueways System provides a national emphasis on the unique value and significance of a “headwaters to mouth” approach to river management, and creates a mechanism to encourage stakeholders to integrate their land and water stewardship efforts by adopting a watershed approach. The Secretarial Order which established the National Blueways System also established an intra-agency National Blueways Committee to provide leadership, direction and coordination to the National Blueways System. Further, the Order directs the bureaus of the Department of the Interior to collaborate in supporting the National Blueways System, to the extent permitted by law and consistent with their missions and resources.

National Blueways are nationally and regionally significant rivers and their watersheds which are highly valued recreational, social, economic, cultural and ecological assets for the communities that depend on

them. The National Blueways program encourages a landscape-scale approach to river conservation, which involves a river from its headwaters to its mouth and across its watershed, rather than individual segments of the channel and riparian area alone. The National Blueways System will help to promote best practices, share information and resources, and encourage active and collaborative stewardship of rivers across the country.

Lt. Governor Simon introduced Anaise Berry, Executive Director of the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway, to give a presentation on the Illinois River Road and its benefits.

### **Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway Presentation – Anaise Berry, Executive Director**

The Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway is part of the National Scenic Byways Program, which is a collection of roads designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation for their outstanding intrinsic qualities. Since 1992, 150 byways have been selected from 46 states to participate in the national program. National Scenic Byways are chosen based on their intrinsic historic, cultural, natural, archaeological, recreational and/or scenic qualities. The National Scenic Byway Program serves to take the driver off of the beaten path, such as highways or interstates, to explore the smaller roads that lead into our communities, while showcasing important historical, cultural, and natural features of the route.

The Illinois River Road was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2005, for its natural intrinsic qualities. The Illinois River Road spans 291 miles between Havana and Ottawa, a length which includes both sides of the Illinois River as well as two small detours to Canton and Princeton. In total, the Illinois River Road runs through 10 counties, and features regional collaboration between 15 supporting communities with over 100 nature sites.

The purpose of the Illinois River Road, as with all National Scenic Byways, is to support visitor-based economic development. The National Scenic Byways, which are marketed both nationally and internationally, bring visitors and tourists into the communities along the driving route. The increased tourism supports local businesses, which in turn, bolster the local economies.

Over the last seven years, work has been done to brand the Illinois River Road. Kiosks and interpretive signage have been placed at key locations along the Illinois River Road to direct the experiences of tourists. Wayfinding signage has also been placed along the byway route, to provide improved navigation. Print materials, videos, and online advertisements have been strategically used as branding and marketing tools to promote the Illinois River Road. All of these branding devices help visitors and tourists to learn about the Illinois River Road and improve access to this important byway.

The communities along the Illinois River Road have also created programs that run the length of the route which provide activities for visitors. Guides to birding sites and restoration and conservation efforts have been placed along the byway for the benefit of visitors. The Illinois River Road also features a geocaching program – a virtual treasure hunt based on GPS marking – for visitors to participate in.

As the main purpose of the National Scenic Byway System is to promote the growth of local economies, the byway communities within the Illinois River Road have also been asked to complete small business studies. These studies assess the small businesses which are available in the community, locate gaps in service, provide recommendations for improvement, and prioritize future projects to increase the quantity and quality of small businesses in the region. At the same time, the area has worked on

business recruitment and expansion, training for small business owners, and development programs to increase the success of small businesses which are already located in byway communities.

The Federal Highway Authority recently announced two grant awards from Fiscal Year 2012 which will positively impact the Illinois River Road. First, a grant totaling \$70,500 has been given to the Illinois River Road to provide interpretive sites for historical and archaeological features of the Illinois River Valley. Also, a portion of a larger \$360,000 grant will be given to the Illinois River Road to create bicycle racks which will promote all of the National Scenic Byways in Illinois. Each bicycle rack will feature the logos of all seven of Illinois' National Scenic Byways, as well as quick response codes which can be scanned by smart phones to take the user directly to the website of each byway.

The Illinois River Road provides numerous authentic experiences based on its intrinsic natural features. These experiences act as a driver for tourism, which in turn produces economic development within the byway communities.

The PowerPoint for this presentation may be accessed [here](#).

To learn more about the Illinois River Road, visit: <http://www.illinoisriverroad.org/>

Lt. Governor Simon introduced Mike Wiant, Director of the Dixon Mounds Museum, to turn the discussion from the national and state levels back to the local venue, the Dixon Mounds Museum. Wiant welcomed visitors to the museum, and provided a brief introduction to its purpose.

#### **Welcome and Introduction to Dickson Mounds Museum – Mike Wiant, Director**

For over eight decades, individuals have come to the Dickson Mounds Museum to learn about the human history of the Illinois River Valley. The centerpiece of this history deals with the relationship between humans and their natural environment, and how that environment sustains and promotes life. The floodplain surrounding the Dickson Mounds Museum has been completely transformed, which has revitalized the institution and provided the opportunity to give further insight on this relationship between humans and their natural environment.

#### **Member Comment Period**

Mitchell thanked the Lt. Governor for her comments on the phone conference that took place on August 7. Because a resolution that was included within the June 20 meeting concerning the potential sand mine near Starved Rock State Park had been postponed pending receipt of the responses from the agencies that were discussed on August 7, Mitchell requested that the Council revisit the resolution at the following IRCC meeting on October 16. Mitchell also requested that the input from the Illinois Attorney General's Office given at the August 7 phone conference be included in the discussion of the potential sand mine.

Worthen noted that he attended the phone conference, held on August 7. He commented that at times, it seems difficult to reach consensus on issues such as the potential sand mine near Starved Rock State Park, as members of the Council come from all interest areas impacting the Illinois River. However, he voiced his opinion that it is important for the Council to recognize its responsibilities and work to reach a consensus that will support the environment and our natural resources.

### **Public Comment Period**

The Lt. Governor introduced John Grigsby, citizen, to make a public comment regarding the Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area.

#### **Save Rice Lake Area Presentation – John Grigsby**

In 1984, a document called the Rice Lake Land Report was prepared to show the natural resources of the Rice Lake area. In the study supporting that document, several threatened and endangered species were found, including fresh water mussels and Bald Eagles. An Illinois Natural Area Inventory Site is also contained within the Rice Lake area. This combination of important natural area and significant numbers of threatened and endangered species make the Rice Lake area an important parcel of state land. Unfortunately, Grigsby voiced his concern that recent rehabilitation projects have damaged the natural resources within the Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area.

The Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area was purchased by the State of Illinois in 1945. In 1986, the USACE and the IDNR decided that Rice Lake needed maintenance work, but waited 25 years to begin the rehabilitation process, which is now underway. Grigsby voiced his concern that the new water system placed in the Rice Lake area by the USACE has harmed the Rice Lake area, including the habitat of many of the important species that previously utilized Rice Lake.

Grigsby argued that the formal statutory process regarding the wildlife and natural resources that should have been completed by the IDNR prior to the maintenance that is now underway was not fully completed. Grigsby voiced his opinion that the way in which the IDNR has handled its Comprehensive Environmental Review Process (CERP) was too informal and was not protective of this valuable state land.

The aforementioned issues fall within the scope of the IRCC, in its role of monitoring concerns impacting the Illinois River. Grigsby argued that the IRCC could request that the IDNR provide full documentation of the CERP that was completed for Rice Lake, as well as the final report that came from the findings of the review process. If the IRCC finds that the required process was not fully completed, based on the CERP report, Grigsby requests that the IRCC draft a resolution seeking that the full review process be followed by the IDNR concerning the Rice Lake area.

The documents presented by Grigsby to the IRCC may be accessed [here](#).

The meeting was postponed for a 15-minute intermission.

Following the intermission, Lt. Governor Simon reconvened the meeting, and welcomed simulcast viewers from the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge. She informed viewers from the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge that the IRCC had been actively engaged in its quarterly meeting, where it reaffirmed its dedication to river, wetland and watershed issues. Lt. Governor Simon then shifted the focus of the IRCC and the audience to a dedication ceremony in honor of the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge.

## **Dedication of the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge as Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance**

### **Dedication Opening Remarks – Lt. Governor Sheila Simon**

Lt. Governor Simon shared that the purpose of the dedication ceremony would be to celebrate the designation of two of Illinois' most precious natural wetland resources, the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge, as Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance. She noted that this designation signified the importance of these two areas not simply locally, but also nationally and globally.

Lt. Governor Simon invited all attendees at both wetland areas to view a video describing the successes of the two wetlands and the importance of their Ramsar designation. The video may be accessed [here](#).

The agenda for this meeting features Kim Connolly, Chair of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee, and Director Marc Miller of the IDNR. Both Connolly and Miller were scheduled to address the Council and the audience via simulcast from the dedication ceremony in Hennepin, at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge. Unfortunately, a storm disrupted the satellite connection linking the two ceremonies, and the two speeches from the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge could not be received at the Dixon Mounds Museum. Instead, the dedication ceremony at the Dixon Mounds Museum featured Charlie Wooley, Deputy Regional Director of the USFWS Midwest Region, and Ivan Zavatsky, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist at the Global Environment Facility.

Lt. Governor Simon introduced Charlie Wooley, Deputy Regional Director of the USFWS Midwest Region, to address the audience concerning the regional, statewide, and national importance of the Emiquon Complex.

### **Dedication Speech – Charlie Wooley, USFWS Midwest Region, Deputy Regional Director**

Wooley thanked the State of Illinois, the Nature Conservancy, and the Wetlands Institute for partnering with the USFWS to make the dedication ceremony a possibility. Wooley also extended thanks to the staff members of all of the organizations focused on conservation efforts for the hard work that they do and the incredible results that they provide.

The USFWS manages more than 12,000 acres of lakes, forests and wetlands along the 125 miles of the Illinois River. This number includes both the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge, which are prime examples of the strength and resilience of natural land. Both the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge, now recognized as Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance, were once drained lands that were converted for farmland. Seeing fish and wildlife reclaim these lands is a wonderful testament to the resilience of floodplain wetlands and illustrates the importance of restoring large ecosystems.

The Emiquon Complex contains a diverse collection of terrestrial and aquatic species, both resident and migratory. Over 200 native bird species have been documented at Emiquon in recent years, and the Complex has held 75% of the migrating water birds in the Illinois River Valley. These numbers further outline the critical role that the Illinois River wetlands play in the Mississippi River flyway. Beyond serving as essential habitat for migrating waterfowl, the Emiquon Complex hosts endangered and

threatened species, and provides a spawning habitat for a productive river fishery. The area also contributes to biodiversity on a regional scale, and provides important recreational opportunities for the American public.

The Emiquon Complex is a special place, clearly worthy of a special recognition as a Wetland of International Importance. Further, the organizations which collaborate to restore, enhance, and improve the wetlands along the Illinois River should feel proud to have their work recognized on a significant, international scale.

Blodgett introduced Ivan Zavadsky, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist at the Global Environment Facility. Zavadsky is visiting the Illinois River from the Danube River System, where he works with The Nature Conservancy as part of the Great Rivers Partnership. Zavadsky provided an international perspective on the importance of the designation of the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge as Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance.

Dedication Speech – Ivan Zavadsky, Global Environment Facility, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist

The Ramsar Convention is one of the oldest global environmental conventions that the Global Environmental Facility supports. In total, the Ramsar Convention features 162 member nations, including the United States. The Ramsar Convention recognizes wetlands as holding international importance only after meeting strict scientific requirements to show their benefit to the environment. At this time, only 2,055 sites have been recognized by the Ramsar Convention, including just 34 sites in the United States.

The implementation of a science-based strategy to restore, enhance and manage natural wetlands at both the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge have had a significant impact on the ecosystem of the Illinois River, including the native plants and animals that it supports. These restoration projects have influenced the management of restoration projects in other areas of the Illinois River, the Mississippi River, and many other great rivers around the world. For this reason, both wetlands have been recognized by the Ramsar Convention.

The work done at the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge supports other restoration projects around the globe by participating in shared scientific research and encouraging scientists to publish their findings. At the same time, the two wetland areas have facilitated the sharing of lessons learned by planning and sponsoring conferences related to wetland management, providing tours of the facilities, and consulting with other managers and scientists on their projects.

The Great Rivers Partnership, facilitated by The Nature Conservancy, assists wetland groups such as the Emiquon Complex with sharing lessons learned. The Great Rivers Partnership is a significant initiative which addresses the global challenges of conservation and the promotion of ecosystem-based management of large rivers in different parts of the worlds. The Emiquon Complex is one of the eight sites within the Mississippi River Basin that The Nature Conservancy uses to facilitate the exchange of scientific practices among those who manage large river systems. The Great River Partnership has allowed student interns from across the globe to research at sites like the Emiquon Complex, in order to share practices and provide new opportunities for young scientists.



The collaboration between the USFWS, The Nature Conservancy, and the Wetlands Institute provides necessary examples of partnership in management of wetlands to management groups across the globe. These partnerships allow management groups to properly serve the fragile ecosystems of wetlands and watersheds.

The Ramsar designation of Wetlands of International Importance validates these successes of the Emiquon Complex and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge in restoration and management of habitats.

#### Dedication Closing Remarks – DK Hirner, Office of the Lt. Governor, Chief of Staff

DK Hirner, Chief of Staff, Office of the Lt. Governor, noted that she previously served as the Executive Director of the Conservation Federation of Missouri, and still feels that it is always a privilege to be among individuals who work so hard with conservation efforts. Hirner voiced her strong belief that Lt. Governor Simon is a conservationist at heart, and that the messages the Lt. Governor shared with the attendees of the dedication are her sincere beliefs. Hirner noted that she and the Lt. Governor had the privilege to view the video before attending the event, and that it made the Lt. Governor excited to come to the dedication to share her congratulations.

Hirner noted that it had been a joy to host the dedication ceremony during the quarterly IRCC meeting at the Dickson Mounds Museum. She thanked the audience for attending the ceremony, and invited every attendee to stay for a ceremony to follow.

Blodgett invited all attendees to join a small ceremony at the Wetland Observatory at the Emiquon Preserve. He noted that there would be a few brief remarks, identification of major contributors to the success of the two wetlands, a toast, and recreational events.

Learn more about the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, as well as the Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance, [here](#).

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.